



# BUDGET COMMITTEE



Judd Gregg, Ranking Member  
<http://budget.senate.gov/repUBLICan>

Contact: Betsy Holahan (202)224-6011

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## **Senator Gregg's Opening Remarks at Senate Budget Committee Hearing on Defense Budget and War Costs: An Independent Look**

**February 23, 2010**  
*(unofficial transcript)*

I want to thank the Chairman, as well as the panel here today to give us their thoughts on defense procurement issues and specifically the defense budget. I appreciate you holding this hearing.

Obviously, defense is the first responsibility of the federal government. Having a strong defensive capability, and making sure that the people who serve us in the military are fully supported, is absolutely a priority for us as a Congress. But that doesn't mean that we shouldn't look at the way these dollars are being spent so we can make sure we are getting the most for the dollars we are spending in all the functions of government, including defense.

Therefore, I'd be interested in this panel's thoughts in this area, but especially as it relates to, as I see, it, defense spending being divided into three areas.

First, obviously is fighting this war -- what does it cost us to fight this war, and what will it cost us to fight this war? What is a fair assessment of that cost? Whatever it takes, we're going to have to spend -- that's just a fact of life because we have soldiers in the field, and they deserve our full support.

Second, of course, is the issue of purchasing weapon systems to support our troops, and a question of which weapons systems we should be supporting and whether we should be changing our focus -- the entire military structure is changing its focus -- and whether our focus is too much in a historical mode with strategic systems.

And the third issue is the cost of personnel, and specifically the cost of personnel post-service, and what the real costs are. What percentage of the defense budget is basically being locked down and put in place in a manner that basically can't be adjusted as a result of those costs being put in place? What other things we should be looking at to try to bring those costs under control, especially in the area of health care in this department, and in the area, obviously, of retirement benefits.

So those are the three areas I'm interested in hearing from the panel, and I appreciate the Chairman having brought them before the Committee today, and I look forward to their testimony.